The Five Pillars of a Highly Effective Safety Management Process

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Introduction

Most businesses face the possibility of worker injuries and accidental losses. Most businesses have some internal function to address this eventuality and try to reduce that risk. This effort usually falls to the "safety department". Traditionally safety management means complying with the company safety program. This program usually follows the safety standards as promulgated by the State or Federal jurisdiction. The organization then may add additional requirements to this program based on past experience, specific needs or external requirements.

Concern for safety and efforts to control worker injuries really came to the forefront after the passage of workers compensation laws. This created an environment that focused industry's attention of the cost of losses resulting from operation. The basic structure of most safety programs goes back to the three Es. This was created by the National Safety Council as a simplification of Heinrich's ten axioms for safety management. The three Es include: engineering solutions, education, and enforcement. Virtually all the safety standards fall into these categories. The engineering solutions address the physical conditions and the protection of employees from exposure to hazards in their physical environment. Education deals with providing the employee with training about the standards and the use of the protective system. And of course enforcement deals with site inspections and getting the workers to comply with the safety standards.

Typically, the intervention strategies used to improve safety performance starts with a review of past losses. The loss analysis then directs the interventions for the coming year(s). These interventions usually consist of more training, emphasis on certain program elements, and more rigorous inspections. In the short term some improvement is inevitable, but in the long run the results never live up to the organization's expectations. Some of this is because the improvement strategy is based on history and the future is never exactly the same. The data analyzed, may not give a true picture of all the contributing causes. The focus is on the worker and not on the organizational systems, the culture, and so on.

The traditional approach has been less than completely successful as shown by historical loss statistics. Most of the incidents that may cause employee injury do not come from the physical environment, but from the actions of the employees. A research study of thousands of accidents completed in Heinrich's time (1920s) found that they could not identify the cause of 2% of the accidents. 10% of the accidents were traced to causes from the physical environment and 88% resulted from actions by the employees. So the traditional safety program's emphasis on conditions does not focus on the behavior of the employees, and therefore has limited impact on controlling the cost-of-risk! More recent thinking, which is the basis of this paper, is that ultimately the greatest driver of incidents, injuries and losses are the systems, climate and culture of the organization.

There are other traditional safety processes that also create barriers to excellence. One is concern for hazards and exposure rather than dealing with risks that reside in the processes, procedure and systems of the organization. Yet another one deals with metrics used to dive improvement. Presently performance is measured by how many incidents occur over a period of a year, with the two major measures dealing with frequency as well as the severity of the incidents. These numbers are then compared to industry averages published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. One of the major shortcomings of this assessment is that the metrics are outcome measures (historical). These organizational metrics are compared to a mediocre standard. Also, these metrics do not provide real-time information with which to manage. They do not tell you what needs correction, and more importantly they do not assist in strategy deployment.

Path to Excellence

The path to safety excellence evolves from virtually little to no management of the safety function through compliance to the safety standards, to safety becoming a priority, to it becoming a value and ultimately to it becoming instinctual. At the instinctual level safety becomes an integral part of operations and business practices. It becomes how things are done and how people act. There are no questions as to choosing between working safely or not. Every decision made has safety in mind.

Upon reaching the instinctual level organizations stop thinking in traditional terms of hazards and exposures but about risk. Not just risk as it relates to the physical environment but also about risks that reside in the operational processes, risks that reside in the business procedures and risks that reside in the organizational systems. The risk focus also addresses the organizational tolerance of risk and communicates this to its entire people. It also addresses the perception of risk and defines what is acceptable and what is not. Risk is then analyzed to determine if it is acceptable, manageable or unacceptable. This is clearly communicated to all the organization's employees. Effort is then expended in understanding the manageable risks and getting them to as low as it is economically and ethically feasible so as to create a business advantage.

Safety Value evolutionary Model
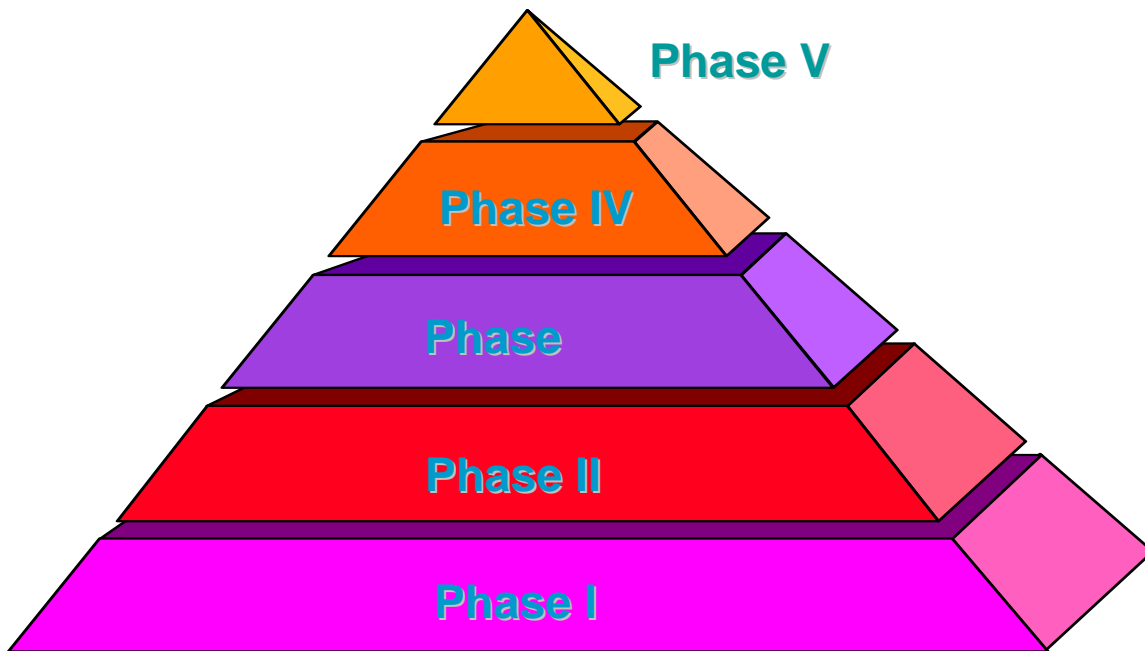
Foundational Elements
Safety best practices establish the foundation on which the Five Pillars framework for excellence rests. This includes all the state of the art safety policies, processes and procedures utilized by the best-in-class organizations in managing their safety performance. This should include the following elements at the minimum:
1. Safety process
   a. Fundamental safety program
   b. Specialized programs
2. Risk focus
3. Integrated pre-operational planning
4. Resources
5. Flawless execution

Programs
The safety program includes all the sound engineering practices, state of the art education, and audits to ensure that policies and procedures are followed. The safety process must also have elements that address the unique needs, risks, and exposures of the organization. The program must become a process which is integrated into operations so that it is a true "part" of the way things are done.

Risk Focus
Traditional safety management focuses on identifying worker exposures to physical hazards and worker behavior. These kinds of interventions do result in some improvement but ultimately they plateau. The reason for this is that injuries may be driven by other risks that are not dealt with in the "hazard-exposure" analysis. To effectively address the elimination of worker injuries the

organization must focus on risk. Some other areas where risk may reside are operational procedures, business practices and organizational systems.

System risk is created by processes or procedures that do not function in harmony with each other. Organizational interventions sometimes are created to address specific issues without thinking through all the ramifications and side-effects. These "friction points" create occasions where employees have to make decisions on how to overcome the barriers in order to accomplish their tasks. So decisions have to be made and they are made based on the "best" information the employee possess at that point in time. The outcomes may not be what the organization wants!

Integrated Pre-Operational Planning
Per-operational planning is by far the most important element in this cornerstone. Planning is a key element of contracting. Contractors are good at planning the work. The key is to plan the work with safety in mind. To effectively plan for safety pre-operational planning must occur very early in the contracting process. Some of the longest lead items dealing with safety may have to be included in the "buy"; therefore safety planning should start at the time of estimating and pricing.

Resources
There must be ample resources and staff to manage the ESM process. ESM needs an executive level champion to provide support, remove barriers, and resolve issues as they arise. Diligent execution is imperative.

Execution
Is not about getting or not getting things done. Execution is a specific pattern of behavior and techniques that managers and supervisors perform in order to influence outcomes. The discipline of execution helps in crafting robust strategies; secure the "right" resources find the right people and put them in the right places. Execution paces everything, aid in accomplishing change. Becoming deeply and passionately involved, and engaged.
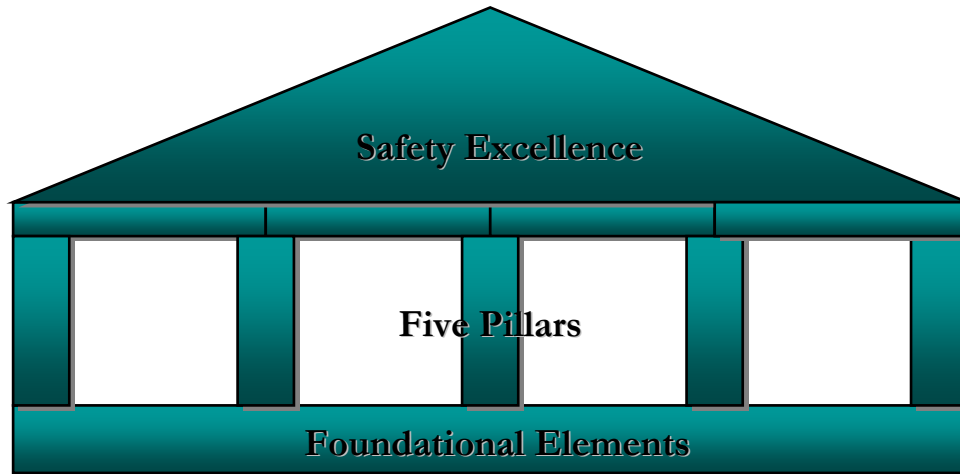
The Five Pillars framework for Excellence
The five pillars then are the framework that create an innovative, excellence driven, business focused approach to addressing challenges in the safety management process. The framework starts with a culture that has a vision & goals for excellence, incorporates leadership, requires win / win thinking, fosters empathic communication, & instills continuous improvement. These basic principles aligned with sound business practices create the basis for a highly effective approach to managing the safety process.

The five pillars supporting an injury free workplace include:
1. Value driven organizational culture
2. Principle centered leadership
3. Business and operational integration
4. Innovation, growth and learning
5. Dashboards and metrics

Safety Excellence Framework

Safety Excellence

Five Pillars

Foundational Elements

Starting with a solid foundation the five pillars will provide a framework for achieving excellence. It will provide the process of going from good performance to superior performance. One has to have a culture that fosters nurtures, supports, rewards, and values, safety. A place where it is safe to not engage in unsafe activities, where it is OK to take time to make things right, to tell a fellow worker to do the right thing, where unsafe production is not acceptable, where risk taking is discouraged. A climate that supports the flow of relevant information and the empowerment to make decisions based on the organizations value system.

Value Based Culture
   Management committed and involved
   Group commitment to a common purpose
   Deeply held core values
   Leader-member exchange
   Organizational justice
   Mutual trust and respect
   Excellent communication and cooperation

Values say a lot about the organization. An organization's values are manifested in the actions & behaviors of management and employees. Where it is not acceptable to have to work 60-80 hours to pull one's weight, where risk taking is only rewarded when you win, where failure is unacceptable, even when you learn from it, where safety is only important because it costs money when accidents occur, where management say we hire

bright people who know how to beat the system, or our competitors are generally stupid & are rarely better than we are, or people that quit our company are generally ones we don't mind losing, or we don't believe in communicating much with our employees about the company's future – they wont understand it, and whenever we have to reduce staff we keep it quiet until the last minute. This kind of culture will not support or achieve excellence in any respect or category. In a value based organizational culture, everyone leads from core principles, contributes to safe operations, is involved and champions safety. Where safety is integrated into operations and is the way business is done at that organization.

Leadership

Leadership is a key element in creating and sustaining a value based culture, which supports excellence. Principle centered leadership involves:

- Behaving ethically
- Causal thinking
- Inspiring a shared vision
- Empowering, enable and encourage others
- Model the way
- Challenge the systems
- Leading change

Leading by principles involves behaving ethically, with integrity, demonstrating concern, giving credit where it is due and treating others with respect and fairness. Sharing control with others, and providing them with relevant and timely information with which to act in the best interest of the organization. Leaders create opportunities for others to succeed by removing barriers. They challenge the status quo and become a change agent. Leaders recognize good ideas and find ways to be an early adopters. They understand their constituents, forge a unity of purpose, ignite passion, and breathe life into other's hopes & dreams

Leadership involves creative thinking - coming up with new ideas, anticipating the future, improvement, etc. It involves strategic thinking – which is all about connecting creativity with value. And leadership is about transformational thinking – which is the ability to take radically new ideas and make them work. Leadership is also about model the way – showing others what success looks like. Work on small wins and show people that they can win. Leaders build people's self confidence. Celebrate accomplishments, and are proponents of win –win thinking.

Business & Operational Integration

Business and operational integration are crucial to the creation of an injury free workplace. The internal systems, processes, and procedures must be in harmony and all work towards the creation

of an injury free workplace. This internal alignment means a 360^0 focus horizontally, vertically and inside to outside flow. It requires empowerment of people, providing them with relevant and timely information, as well as resources, incentive and leadership, as well as flawless execution.

Innovation, Growth & Learning

Innovation, growth & learning are important because of the nature of modern business. Just about the only constant in business is that change is inevitable. And change is occurring at faster and faster rates. So the organization has to understand their competitive environment, their customers (stakeholders) needs and wants, be early adopters and change leaders. Innovation should be encouraged and rewarded. The idea is to create a synergistic environment.

The innovation continuum includes efficiency, evolutionary, and revolutionary innovation. Growth involves increased knowledge and understanding of the employees thereby enabling them to effectively operate, and support the internal integration and alignment necessary to create the injury free workplace.

Dashboards & Metrics

To effectively manage you need to measure, senior management understands that the measurement system influences organizational behavior. Effective measurement has to be predictive as well as prescriptive in nature if it is to provide information for managing performance. Measurement is difficult because it is not an exact science. There are no hard and fast rules, of how to go about it. To make things more complicated, it is difficult to foretell the impact on individual behavior, the interactions and interrelationships between existing diverse variables, and the new ones produced by the new metrics. This is because people are involved and their actions are inherently unpredictable. Another thing that contributes to the complexity is that often important factors are hard to measure consistently and objectively. To effectively measure this, variability must be designed out of the system.

The scorecard also serves to bring together into one report several important but seemingly diverse aspect of the business, such as the external as well as the internal focus. Any organizational scorecard will influence the thinking of senior managers and force them to consider all the important operational measures holistically. It also allows them to see if improvement in one area is gained at the expense of another. "Even the best objectives may be achieved badly," Another important aspect of the organizational scorecard is that it creates a platform for alignment within the organization. This is important to strategy deployment, as well as guarding against sub-optimization.

Excellence in safety can only be achieved though a strategy-driven, performance-based safety management process. The question is now how can we devise a safety process that will enable us to take advantage of the five pillar framework to impact safety

performance? Obviously we need to approach the process holistically. Safety should be fully integrated into the organization's operations, and safety outcomes should be aligned with business goals. Therefore the safety process will become woven into the very fabric of the organization and achieving an injury free workplace will naturally flow from the operation.